THE MEN OF THE GOSPELS

LYNN HAROLD HOUGH

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THE MEN OF THE GOSPELS

BY
LYNN HAROLD HOUGH

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TO MY FRIEND

FRANK GILBERT HAVEN STEVENS

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I

THE MAN AT THE THRESHOLD OF THE GOSPELS

I think he had not heard of the far towns;
Nor of the deeds of men, nor of king's crowns:
Before the thought of God took hold of him,
  As he was sitting dreaming in the calm
Of one first noon, upon the desert's rim,
  Beneath the tall fair shadows of the palm,
  All overcome with some strange inward balm.

So wrote the Irish poet, Arthur O'Shaughnessey, of John the Baptist, and so writing he touched two matters which are very important to any man who would understand the desert prophet. The first is that nature had a great share in making him. The sights and sounds of the solitary wilderness were for years familiar to him. The expansive sky above, the pure air to breathe, and all the wide outdoor life of the

desert became a part of the very character of John. The physical health which nature gives to those who live in most intimate terms with her was his. The quick eye, the direct and incisive habit of mind, the freedom from all the graceful deceptions of civilization, the rugged, expressive speech which might have been taken fresh from the soil—all these were the contribution of that life in the desert which was a school to John.

Then he was simply engrossed in the thought of God and God's righteous will. The quiet of the desert gave an opportunity for religion to become a possessing thing to John, but it did not give him the thought which possessed him. Early memories of a home where piety was dominating and early teachings rich with a consciousness of Jehovah's

character had helped to open John's mind and heart. Then that which made him a man of God and a prophet came to him. God touched the life and the consciousness of John in unmistakable fashion. What he had heard was now what he had experienced. God was no longer merely a great idea. He was the master of John's life.

The youth in the desert was a man as well as a prophet in the making. He fought a man's battles. In the strength of God he was victorious. How intense were his struggles we can begin to understand as we listen to the moral passion of his preaching. It is the speech of a man who has looked into the burning, hungry eyes of the beast and has felt its hot breath upon his face.

During his years in the wilderness

John brooded much upon the Old Testament, the life of Israel, and the future God held in store. There were two ways to view Israel's life. One might see it as a political patriot. Then he dreamed of world empire. One might see it as a moral patriot. Then he dreamed of the triumph of righteousness. The Hebrew prophets had been dominated by the moral view of their nation's life. John made their outlook his own. It was this which saved him from the selfish superficiality of viewing the Messiah as another Alexander heading triumphant armies for secular victories.

When John's voice rang out on the banks of the Jordan it was the breaking into speech of a moral and spiritual energy which compelled attention. The rude and uncouth figure fresh from the desert had a

strange imperial mien which awed and amazed men. He was mastered by the high consciousness that he spoke for God, and men felt that once again a prophet had risen among them.

His words opened great doors of hope: the Messiah was about to come; but they cut like sharp blades: the Messiah would come as a judge and all evil would be overthrown. It would be a day of reckoning and a day of doom. Sinners in Israel would have as much to fear as sinners out of Israel. To listen to John's preaching was like bending to receive a scourging, but so mighty was the power of his words that multitudes came to hear in spite of the dread of the lash. To-day was the day of repentance. There was time to turn from wickedness. There was time to cast off evil ways. John

used a great symbol to express repentance and the utter change of life. He baptized penitents in the river, whose washing waters typified cleansed lives. Men eagerly sought his baptism. They turned from their sins. A mighty revival swept over the land. John was like an incarnate conscience, and Israel heeded his words. There was a shrewd practical insight in his dealing with men. He required faithfulness to the tasks their place in life brought to them. He interpreted righteousness in terms of human faithfulness. He did not command them to observe a new ritual. He commanded them to live a new life.

So it came to pass that Jesus entered upon his mission in a country morally awake. There was a new spirit over all the land because John had spoken. Jesus had an audience

to which he could utter words they could not have understood had John never preached. Men looked at him out of conscience-haunted eyes because John had roused in them a new sense of the demands of righteousness.

But Jesus brought more than an emphasis on John's message. He brought a satisfaction of all the need John's ministry had brought to light. Sin was a dreadful monster the consciousness of whose presence John's ministry had roused. But John was unable to slay the monster. Some sudden sense of a dealing with sin more fundamental than any of which his ministry had been able to tell flashed through the mind of John when he said of Jesus, "Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!"

John died a martyr. Jesus died a

sinbearer. John was preparing the way for the gospel. Jesus achieved the gospel. John was the greatest man of the old age, peering over into the new. Jesus was the creator of the new age who gathered up into his ministry all the deep, true meaning of the old.

With all his dominant desert manhood John was content to recognize his Master. The last expression of his greatness was his submission to Jesus. He began by calling himself a voice. He was always eager to direct attention away from himself. He ended by calling himself a friend of the Bridegroom. In his self-surrender there was a profound personal satisfaction. It was sufficient to be a friend of Jesus.

The moral might of John's message always finds a place where there is true preaching. At the

threshold of every age's experience of the gospel there is needed a stern-faced prophet who becomes a conscience to his time.

II

THE MAN OF QUICKSAND WHO BECAME A MAN OF ROCK

You cannot always admire Peter, but you find it very hard not to like him. He is so real and frank, so impulsive and eager, so spontaneous and human that he makes a place for himself even in those narratives dominated by the great personality of the Man of Galilee.

It was like Jesus to meet this man of rash daring and quick reaction, this fisherman whose strength was in his emotions, and whose weakness was in his will—it was like Jesus to meet this man and to give him the name Peter, because he was to become a man of rocklike strength. Jesus always thought more about

what men might become than what they were. He always measured men by their capacity rather than by their history.

Peter had felt the stern summons of the preaching of John the Baptist. His conscience had been held fast by those words of moral power. He could no more be a man engrossed by the pursuits of a catcher and seller of fish after listening to John. So he was in some sense prepared for the call of Jesus. The strange light of a moral awakening was in his eye when Jesus first spoke to him. But Peter was more attracted by Jesus than he had ever been by John. The last of the prophets had spoken to his conscience. Jesus spoke to his whole life. The human glow and richness of the life of the Man of Galilee met a need which John the Baptist had

never comprehended. Looking at Jesus, Peter somehow felt that a man might have a moral fire blazing in his heart and yet be a glad and winsome comrade of men. He was glad to follow Jesus. So he heeded the call.

It was not simply true that Peter was especially attracted by Jesus, it was also true that the Master felt a particularly warm affection for Peter. That blundering, dashing, eager disciple, with flashes of almost uncanny intuition, and quick descents into groveling incapacity to understand, drew heavily upon the sympathy and love of Jesus. His robust, wholesome, whole-hearted devotion to his Master was one of the bright things about the human career of Christ. He was made not only one of the twelve, but one of the three nearest to Jesus. He was with the Master

on the Mount of Transfiguration and in Gethsemane. He easily took a place of leadership among the twelve.

But still he was a man of the quicksands. On the Mount of Transfiguration he so enjoyed spiritual ecstasy that he wanted to stay there forever. He forgot all about the need of those in the valley. In Gethsemane he slept while his Master was in an agony of untold suffering. He had the enthusiasm which started to walk on the water, and which cut off the ear of an enemy of Jesus, but after a violent beginning a sudden reaction was likely to leave him weak and helpless.

All the while, however, he was really growing. The touch of the life of Jesus upon his own was by no means in vain. When many turned from Jesus and the Master sadly asked the twelve if they, too,

would forsake him, it was Peter who replied, "To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." When, after speaking his great words and doing his great deeds in the presence of the disciples, Jesus asked, "Whom say ye that I am?" it was Peter who rose to the demand of that high question and replied, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." There he stood, eyes aflame, heart warm with devotion, mind lifted to some new height of comprehension, confessing the mastery and the Lordship of Jesus. All that the creeds have affirmed of Jesus was implicit in his words. As the Master looked at him, a living man making a vital confession of his Lordship, a confession growing out of Peter's own experience, he felt that here indeed was an example of what was to be the basis of all his

power. Upon this rock of the confession growing out of a personal experience of the Lordship of Christ was the church to be founded.

But at last, in a most critical hour, it was the man of quicksand, and not the man of rock, who stood forth before the world. Peter denied his Master. He denied him vehemently and with cursing. Misconception, bewilderment, the reaction to which his temperament was so liable, cowardice in the presence of the triumphant opinion of the world against Jesus—all these broke upon his life and left it a stranded wreck.

What the experience cost Peter in suffering repentance we may not fathom. That it cost Jesus an added pang in the hour of his own great pain we may be very sure. But the prophecy of Jesus was not to fail. The man of quicksand was yet to

become a man of rock. After the resurrection Jesus signalized his confidence in his impulsive disciple by giving him a great work to do. There was no way to lead him toward strength like making him responsible for others. Then came Pentecost with its baptism of mighty vitality. Peter now found the secret of continuous bravery. His words were unflinching, his suffering glad and heroic, his leadership steady. The Peter of the book of Acts has become a man of rock.

It was to Peter that there was given the vision of the descending sheet. To this very human disciple came the revelation that God cared for human beings everywhere. He was the first of the twelve to be shaken out of the provincialism which would have made of Christianity a Jewish sect.

Advancing years found Peter a great apostle to dispersed Jews. Old faults appeared sometimes; once Paul found it necessary to rebuke him; but his great battle was fought, his great victory was won. He had become a man of unflinching Christian loyalty and of genuine leadership. He was ready to give life itself, at last, a glad offering to his Saviour and Lord.

III

ONE OF THE SONS OF THUNDER

Two men of the Gospels are referred to as Sons of Thunder. They are James and John. Jesus, we are told, surnamed them "Boanerges, which is Sons of Thunder." There is some difficulty about this term "Boanerges" and getting it to have the meaning which Mark offers. The explanation of Mark, however, is rich in suggestiveness, and it offers quite the best point of departure for the study of the man who is the subject of this chapter—the apostle John.

We ordinarily think of John as an incarnation of gentleness; a man whose tender and winsome ways especially endeared him to Jesus;

the mystic of the twelve whose brooding contemplations enrich the fourth Gospel, and whose splendid visions shine forth in the Apocalypse. There is much truth in this picture of a deep-eyed man with an inner life full of the wonder of a brooding sense of God; but this is what John became. This is not John as he is first introduced to us, nor is it John in the making.

An intense, eager young fisherman, of that decisive energy of temperament which may harden into cold rigidity or may soften into mellow strength, John heard the preaching of the last of the prophets with an instant and deep responsiveness. He became a disciple of the flaming preacher of righteousness, and his own character was given an additional sharpness and vehement faithfulness by the days spent in the

company of the man whose words burst forth like sudden thunder.

Then Jesus met John. At once the life of the impetuous, eager young man appeared as a fertile field for his sowing. He was invited to become a companion of Jesus, and the passing days found him disciple, apostle, and intimate friend. The intense capacity of John for devotion, and his fiery loyalty to Jesus, appear now and then in the Gospels. He was one of those who would have called down fire on the Samaritan village which would not receive Jesus—a Son of Thunder and lightning, indeed! He was ready to silence a man who performed miracles in the name of Jesus, but was not one of the circle especially called by the Master. Incisive, masterful judgments were ready to leap to his lips. Then it seems clear that

John was very ambitious. With his brother James and their mother Salome, he planned a dramatic request that the two brothers should have the most princely places in the kingdom of Jesus. An imperial spirit was ready to take possession of these fishermen. Their dreams were colored with purple. This vivid wrath and climbing ambition needed much discipline ere the mellow and gracious personality which is felt in the writings of John had really come into being.

Jesus dealt in stern kindness and fearless love with the disciple whose temperament had such hot and mounting energy. The saving facts about John were two: First, there was a deep and noble earnestness in his character. Second, he was entirely devoted to Jesus. He was one of those chosen to share in the great

experiences of the Master's life. On the Mount of Transfiguration he did not break into speech, as did Peter, but he was present and he had feelings too deep for words. He was near to Jesus in Gethsemane and he shared in the strange, cruel panic of that dreadful night.

Then love conquered fear. He followed his Master. His relations with those in authority secured his admission among those who were enacting the last tragic scenes in the life of Jesus. When the hour on Calvary came he was standing near the cross, and it was to him that Jesus committed his mother—a last charge, full of trust and love.

John's silence in the Gospels has been commented upon. It is really remarkable how little he speaks, as far as the records go. But he is seeing the great works of Jesus; he

is hearing his matchless speech; and in long hours of meditation the meaning of it all is to become clear to him. The hot, impetuous nature softens with the passing years and the touch of the divine power upon the life of John. The inner meaning of religion is being more and more fully revealed to him.

After Pentecost, John comes to be one of the leaders of the church. He is associated with Peter in the guiding of the destinies of the little company which is so soon to fill the world with its evangel and the evidences of its power. There is a contrast between Peter and John. In Peter religion tends to express itself in practical activity; in John it tends to take fuller possession of the inner life. Peter's eyes are turned without; John's eyes are turned within. If in Peter you have the tempera-

ment which would belong to a primate of a visible church, in John, after he has matured, you have a temperament which would fit some mystic primate of men's hearts.

Tradition, which we have no adequate reason to doubt, tells us that John lived to a great age and that Ephesus was the scene of his final ministry. A finely tempered spirituality breathes through his writings, and it must first have expressed itself in his speech. The fires of his early manhood had not burned out; they had become the steady glow of a life always full of warmth, but saved from conflagration. He was capable always of intense feeling and of hot outbursts of noble wrath, but the surface of his life was marked by the gentle stillness of one who has found the secret of perennial repose.

He left behind him the odor of a beautiful and tender sanctity, and over the life of the church has been diffused a certain noble mysticism which has come from him. When you think about Peter your emphasis is likely to be on Christian action; when you think about Paul your emphasis is likely to be on Christian thought; when you meditate about John Christian feeling, pure and lofty and serene, begins to pour into your heart.

IV

THE HEROIC DOUBTER

This is not an easy world for a man without wings. Thomas, the loyal, doubting disciple of Jesus, did not find life very bright or glad. No wings of mounting faith had been given to him as a part of his equipment; he was of a slow, hesitating habit of mind. He distrusted vivid and heated speech. He did not understand men of mystical temper. He was a prosaic, earnest man, essentially commonplace in thought and feeling.

Peter and Thomas present a most interesting contrast. Peter had faith but lacked steadiness; Thomas had steadiness but lacked faith. Peter rose to heights and also sank to depths; Thomas rose to no such

heights and sank to no such depths. Peter had great flashes of intuition, but he did not always keep his hold on the truths which came to him in these moments of inspiration. Thomas had no such moments of sudden intuitive insight, but when once he grasped a truth his hold on it was sure and tenacious.

One wonders a little at finding Thomas among the twelve. It seems strange at first that Jesus desired to have such a man as a member of his immediate circle. It seems strange that Thomas, being just the sort of man he was, cared to be numbered among the twelve. The enterprise of Jesus was one which required glowing faith, a quick sense of the unseen, and an agile mind ready to see and appropriate new ideas. These are just the characteristics which Thomas did not possess. The mis-

sion of Jesus, however, was not to men of a certain temperament and intellectual type. It had to do with humanity. Each fundamental type was to be reached and mastered. Thomas was needed to complete the apostolic circle. Then Thomas was infinitely attracted by Jesus, though his mind did not completely follow his heart. He felt the compulsion of the personality of Jesus, while his judgment followed his devotion with lagging steps. There was an inner battle in Thomas. His heart and his head did not agree. It was through his heart that Jesus spoke to this man of a sluggish mind, and Thomas followed his heart. He had no end of mental misgivings, but his loyalty was unswerving to the end.

Discipleship was a more or less thorny path for Thomas. Jesus kept saying things he did not understand,

and what he did understand did not always commend itself to him. When a flash of mental sympathy went through the circle of the disciples Thomas often stood with perplexed and troubled brow. He did not share in the moment of illumination. But all the while he grew more deeply attached in a personal way to his Master. He did not understand him, but he did love him with a great devotion.

The time came when Judæa was a hostile country to Jesus. There were hatred and plotting, and to go there again meant a grave risk of life, but Lazarus died, and Jesus announced to his disciples that he would go back into what had become for him the enemy's country. The disciples looked at each other furtively. It was a wild and useless risk their Master was taking. If he

insisted on going would they go with him and risk their lives too? Or would they refuse to accompany him on so foolhardy a journey? It was Thomas who spoke, and for the time became the leader of the twelve. He had no light to throw on the subject. The future was completely black to him. He had no faith, but he had heroic loyalty. If they went back he felt that they would all be killed. But they had given their allegiance to Jesus. It was no time to fail him now. "Let us go," he said, "and die with him." The desperate loyalty of Thomas roused the other disciples and they all followed the Master back to Judæa. Probably no one was more surprised than Thomas when no tragic results followed immediately.

When the last terrible tragedy came Thomas sank into misanthropy

and despair. It was not so much a reaction with him as with the others. He had had his deep misgivings, and lately they had grown stronger. Now his sober judgment was vindicated. His Master had failed. He had been killed. Thomas would never see him again. It was small comfort, however, that Thomas had expected some tragic end to the ministry of his Master. He had loved Jesus, and now that face of glowing, eager friendliness and lofty love would never be seen again. His heart bled at the thought. He had nothing to look forward to. He had only wonderful memories. He sat nursing them in silent gloom. He had not heart enough to meet with the disciples as in mutual fellowship they tried to comfort one another. Thus he missed the first appearance of Jesus to the company

of the disciples. When he heard of it he refused to believe that it was true. He would not allow his wounded heart to be comforted by delusive hopes. He would not believe unless he could touch the very marks of Calvary on the body of Jesus. He was a materialist by nature. The last word of proof to him was the testimony of touch.

Now, however, Thomas did meet with the disciples. Again Jesus appeared while his skeptical disciple gazed with wide and wonder-filled eyes in which love and doubt struggled for the mastery. He was perfectly honest and earnest and sincere. His mind simply refused to take the great truth in. Then Jesus stooped to the need of Thomas. He offered to submit to the very test Thomas had required. He commanded him to reach forth his hand and touch

the marks of the hour on the cross.

Now, for once, Thomas had his flash of intuition. Now, at last, he had his moment on the Mount of Transfiguration. He did not reach forth his hand. He opened his mind. He took the great truth in and welcomed it and accepted it. Mind and heart were in accord at last. With a great joyous faith which the years were to be unable to change, he cried out, "My Lord and my God."

V

THE TRAITOR

JUDAS is the strangest figure in the gallery of the Gospels. He is a study in the failure of environment. The surroundings of Judas were a constant moral and spiritual summons. Against this background his treachery stands out in unrelieved blackness.

Wonderful sights Judas saw. He was present again and again when Jesus performed miracles. He saw in the closest and most intimate way that flashing forth of divine power which caused all Israel to wonder. He saw sickness vanish at the word of Jesus, and looked upon the blind as with glad, wondering eyes they beheld the world where they had lived unseeing. He saw nature

obedient to the command of Jesus, and beheld the dead come forth to life at the Master's bidding. If the direct and complete exhibition of divine power could move a man, surely Judas should have been completely convinced and mastered by Jesus. But more than this did Judas see. In the constant fellowship of the twelve with Jesus he had full opportunity to observe the Master's life. The radiant unselfishness of that great life unfolded before him day by day. The stainless purity of it was seen by him as only one of the chosen companions of Jesus could see it. The miracle of a perfect and winsome manhood was the greatest miracle which Judas beheld. This he looked upon constantly, month after month, until months grew into years.

Wonderful words did Judas hear.

Many a man found a single discourse of Jesus unforgettable, and his whole outlook on life changed by it. Judas heard discourse after discourse. He heard Jesus speak to the great multitudes, he heard the quiet conversations of Jesus with the disciples as they walked along the road, or sat together under the silent, shining stars. Judas heard the parables with their winsome, human sympathy and their moral penetration. He heard those brief, telling sentences of Jesus which condensed a volume of spiritual truth into a pregnant phrase. The view of life which was the great mental gift of Jesus to men was given out in the presence of Judas. He had the fullest and completest opportunity to hear and to understand it all. Then Judas had the added summons which came from the fact that Jesus se-

lected him to be one of his own disciples. The Master saw something in Judas which made him desirable as one of the leaders of the early church. He invited him to leave the great company of casual hearers and become his own accredited messenger. He took him in training for a great future work. An opportunity unexcelled was his.

In the circle of the disciples the practical gifts of Judas were recognized and he was made the treasurer of the little company. He seems to have belonged to the mental type of the man of affairs, and his qualities were needed in the early Christian Church.

If recognition, and honor, and opportunity could make a good man, what a noble man Judas should have been! His surroundings gave him every opportunity and motive

for goodness. Yet it was Judas, who had seen and heard and shared the great ministry of the Son of man, who became a traitor and betrayed his Lord.

At the beginning there were two of Judas, as there are two of every man. There was the Judas who was drawn by the nobility of the life of Jesus and might have become a true disciple. There was the Judas who desired wealth and external prosperity above all things. Strangely enough, both aspects of Judas at first responded to Jesus. His best self felt the moral and spiritual power of the Master. He shared the inadequate Messianic notions of his time, and so the Judas who was looking for wealth and external power expected Jesus to provide them too.

As time went on he learned his

mistake. Perhaps he was one of the first of the disciples to see that the program of Jesus was not the brilliant campaign of a victorious conqueror. In his Master Judas could find moral and spiritual Lordship, but he was to be no princely dispenser of honors and gold. With this discovery a battle began in Judas. Would he give up his desire for wealth and power and accept the ideal of life Jesus voiced in such matchless words? Or would he repudiate the unworldly Galilæan and seek in some new vocation to find opulence and position? It was a hard battle and it was complicated by a strange feeling in the breast of Judas. Perhaps in spite of the lowliness of Jesus he might yet come to the throne. The lower desires of Judas might be gratified by remaining one of the twelve. The result of

all the struggle was that Judas came to an inner repudiation of Jesus and his ideals, and yet, held by material hopes, persisted in, though the words of Jesus did not justify them, he remained one of the twelve. After this inner repudiation his moral deterioration was rapid. He began to pilfer the funds intrusted to him. He began to hate Jesus. The perfect life lived before him was a constant rebuke, and it raised a hard, bitter antagonism. The eyes of Jesus fell on him sometimes in a sad, reproachful way. This angered him the more. At last he became convinced that the material hopes which had kept him in the circle of Jesus would never be fulfilled. He resolved to break away from his connections with the disciples and gratify his hatred of Jesus in one deed. He sold his Master to his foes. It was all done

with hard and cruel strength of purpose. The full cup of hatred was quaffed when he kissed his Master in betraying him.

Then a strange thing happened. The rigid will of Judas lost all its strength. A terrible gloom settled down upon him. It was not a moral repentance, but a heavy realization of the meaning of what he had done. He was alone in a blackened world. He could not stand the weight of it, and in despair he took his own life. The church can never forget the summons to sober earnestness and humility which comes from the fact that one of the disciples of Jesus was a traitor and a suicide.

VI

THE MAN WHO WOULD NOT PAY THE PRICE

SOMETIMES a single scene gives you an adequate picture of a man's character. Sometimes one conversation is completely revealing as to a man's great temptation and his deepest struggle. The Gospels contain such pictures and such conversations. We read a few sentences and pause full of awe and wonder. We have stood alone with a man's soul.

The story of the rich young ruler (Matthew 19. 16–22; Mark 10. 17–22; Luke 18. 18–23) is of this character. With Oriental ceremony and much show of gracious courtesy, this high-bred, eager young patrician of the Jews knelt before Jesus. "Good

Master," he cried, "what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" There was a conventional courtesy about his speech, a substitution of the graciousness of good breeding for the graciousness of sincerity, which grated on the feelings of Jesus. He could never be pleased by a merely conventional compliment. "Why callest thou me good?" he replied. "'Good' is a great word," he said in effect. "It is only God who can be called completely good. Such a high and noble word should not be used carelessly and superficially."

This verbal turn at the beginning of the conversation tells us some important things about the young man. However eager and honest his intention, he did not come pressed by the burden of any great moral struggle. He was a wholesome, hearty young man, impressed by the

personality of Jesus, and vaguely desiring some deeper and fuller life than he had known. What he needed was not to be delivered from a bitter struggle. If he was to have a life of genuine depth he needed to have a great struggle brought on.

His question had been about eternal life. Replying in terms which he could easily understand, Jesus referred him to the commandments.

The young man, desiring concrete teaching, pressed for a more definite answer. Jesus repeated from the Decalogue words emphasizing our duties toward our fellow men. He was beginning to come to closer quarters with the richly clad young ruler as he emphasized his human obligations. The reply did not daunt the young man, however. He had been trained in a home of piety. He had received its teachings with re-

spect and had obeyed them. "All these things," he replied, "I have observed from my youth up." But even as he spoke the dim sense of deeper need which had brought him to Jesus throbbed more decisively in his heart. Something in the bearing of Jesus too seemed to suggest depths of moral and spiritual demand he had not fathomed. With a noble seriousness which spoke with a deeper reality than had marked anything he had yet said, he asked, "What lack I yet?"

During the conversation Jesus had been studying this well-made, vigorous, wholesome young man with the glow of health upon his face, and the marks of refinement in his every word and gesture. He was a great contrast to the lusty peasant disciples Jesus had gathered around him, but this man represented a large

class in the world Jesus had come to save, and if he would make the great surrender he had tremendous moral and spiritual possibilities. Locked up in his life were potencies which if made actual would be of large service in the kingdom of God. He was scarcely awake to life's deepest meaning as yet, but if he could be roused he would become a strong man of God.

Looking thus upon him in his fresh, unspoiled manhood, and thinking of all that he might become, Jesus felt his heart warming with love for this young man. He wanted him for his own. He wanted him for his kingdom. With kindling, yearning eyes of affection he looked upon him. Then he decided to offer this man the greatest gift which even Jesus could give. He would invite him to become one of his disciples.

It would mean great sacrifice; he must surrender wealth and position; but it would be tremendously worth the cost. Losing his life, he would find it. The great surrender would be the gateway to a greater heritage; so Jesus spoke the great demand and the great invitation: "Sell what thou hast and give to the poor." "Come, follow me."

The words came with strange unexpectedness to the young ruler. In a flash they revealed his great weakness and his supreme opportunity. The love of luxury and possessions had fastened itself upon his life more deeply than he knew. He seemed held tight in his own devotion to wealth. But something else he felt too: the summons of a life greater than any of which he had ever dreamed, a life of sacrifice, and achievement, and companionship

with Jesus. He seemed to feel a purer air blowing on his face. The eyes of Jesus were bent upon him, and his heart thrilled with the tender winsomeness of that great word "Come."

So the higher and the lower fought in the heart of this young man in his life's supreme moment. Then the light faded from his eye; the heroic vision passed; the love of gold and lands clutched tightly, and he surrendered. With troubled face he turned away. The wonderful gate which had been opened before him closed.

A grim sense of what he was losing came heavily upon him. Deeper gloom settled upon his heart. Still he continued to walk away. Life's moment of strategy had come and gone, and he had failed.

VII
NICODEMUS

We have already seen that the men of the Gospels represent varied human types. In Nicodemus a new variety emerges. This judicial and formal Pharisee, with a hungry heart underneath his dignified exterior, has many things to teach us. A superficial observer would have been sure to misjudge Nicodemus. He would have seen the somewhat cold and mechanical bearing of this member of the Sanhedrin and would have heard the conventional tones of his speech. Then he would have pronounced judgment. This is a mere husk of a man. There is no fountain of vitality playing within. He is satisfied with the surface of life, provided it be arranged with propriety and dignity.

When Nicodemus seeks to interview Jesus by night there is much in his approach to the Great Teacher which seems to confirm this judgment. He makes quite a show of a judicial mind dealing with a new and difficult phenomenon. He utters a perfectly conventional judgment in a perfectly conventional way. He shows no feeling for the deeper quality of the ministry of Jesus. There is no spark of fire in his eye to indicate that his soul has been touched. He is setting the processes of rabbinical reasoning to work with respect to the ministry of Jesus, and the result he declares in a formal and stilted fashion is a conviction that Jesus is a teacher sent from God.

Many a man would have been tempted to pay little attention to Nicodemus. What was there in this

fossilized life to respond to the vital ministry of Jesus, all surging with vigor and red blood? Jesus did not regard the matter in this way. He saw beneath the surface of formal dignity, and there he found a restless soul. Under the shell there was a kernel, and in characteristic fashion Jesus sought that at once. Looking Nicodemus in the eye, he declared that if a man would see the kingdom of God he must be born anew. Jesus simply ignored the rabbinical words of this ruler of the Jews and brought him face to face with one of the great realities of life. Not arguing about miracles, but seeking an inner vitality which would make life over again, was the part of the true and earnest man. The reply of Nicodemus shows how much shell there was to his life, and might well have discouraged anybody but Jesus about

the kernel. With the crassest literalness of speech he asked how it could at all be possible for a man to be physically reborn. Jesus reminded him of the ministry of John the Baptist, of his rite of washing, which had represented repentance, and his prophecy of the greater baptism of the Spirit. Unless a man be born of water and the Spirit, declared the Great Teacher, God's kingdom is closed to him. Repentance and renewal by vital forces coming from God himself are the great matters of life. The wheels of the mind of Nicodemus, creaking with their rabbinical thoughts, refused to respond to these teachings of the Master. He was completely bewildered. "How can these things be?" he asked, dully. Jesus expressed astonishment that a religious leader of his people should know so little of such

a fundamental matter as the necessity of a new and morally creative life to renew a man's nature after the fashion of the will of God.

Then the Master chose a unique method of dealing with Nicodemus. He simply bombarded him with great truths. He gave matchless expression to God's sacrificial love. He talked of salvation and his own relation to it. He talked of that being lifted up which was to be his great work in the world. He talked of that love of dark things and dark ways which would turn men's hearts from him. Jesus seems to have felt that Nicodemus belonged to the type of man you must shock into consciousness of new truth. He fairly dazzled him with the light he let fall upon his mind.

Then Nicodemus went away. That was all he could do. His

pitiable superficial life lay in fragments all about him. Something new and great seemed to be offered. He must think it out, and struggle through its meaning. Nicodemus came to Jesus for immediate knowledge. Jesus gave him something better. He gave him a battle. He sent him forth to the fight of his life. The superficial Pharisee and the man of eager, hungry life must do battle, and one of them must be destroyed.

We next hear of Nicodemus eighteen months later. The Sanhedrin, disappointed at failing to get possession of Jesus, is venting its wrath in angry words. Nicodemus makes a protest. Should they condemn a man who has not had a personal hearing? he asks. It is significant that this man of the temperament which always inclines to the view of

the majority should have made this protest. The real man is gaining some headway in fighting the Pharisee.

We have only one more glimpse of Nicodemus. The account of the trial of Jesus contains no reference to this ruler of the Jews. Did he remain away in fear? Was it impossible for him to be present and protest? We do not know. Now Jesus has been crucified and Joseph of Arimathæa is about to prepare the body for burial. Nicodemus appears with a great offering of myrrh and aloes—about a hundred pounds. It is the tribute of his heart to the One who looked beneath the surface of him and found the man.

The man who went as far as Nicodemus may well have gone farther. It is good to believe that

when the battle was at last fought out, the man had conquered the Pharisee and Nicodemus had become a Christian. What is certain is that Jesus saw through an amount of conventionality which would have repulsed most men of passionate sincerity and found the real Nicodemus in his restless heart. Jesus won the affection of this ruler of the Jews and we hope that at last he won his complete allegiance.

VIII

CAIAPHAS

We have only a few glimpses of Caiaphas in the Gospels. He appears and speaks a few words and then passes from view. But his words are always very influential, and the glimpses we have of Caiaphas allow us to look right into his life and see what manner of man he was.

This high priest was a Sadducee, a selfish worldling, with astute insight into the processes of men's minds. He was a leader by right of shrewdness and personal power, and not by right of moral earnestness or spiritual loftiness of character. He was a secular ecclesiastic to whom the deeper meanings of life were a closed book.

Of course such a man would not be

attracted by Jesus. His first definite knowledge of the prophet of Galilee made him sure that this seer of moral and spiritual passion lived in a different world from his own. At first he may have been inclined to regard Jesus as a harmless visionary. There may even have been a time when he debated whether it would be possible to use Jesus for the furthering of his own selfish ends. The time came, however, when this astute official of the Jewish Church saw that Jesus was a dangerous antagonist. He was not merely a poet singing of an ideal day. He was a powerful personality, winning men's allegiance and leading them to the place where the standards he set forth became dominant in their lives. The men who believed in Jesus must inevitably become the critics of men like Caiaphas. Loyalty to the Galilæan

prophet would eventuate in hostility to the Sadducean priesthood. Caiaphas was probably one of the first men in Jerusalem to reach this conclusion. He was not a good man, but he was a resolute character. When he became convinced that Jesus must be regarded as a foe he prepared to crush him.

We do not know in how many ways the hostility of Caiaphas may have made the life and work of Jesus difficult, but it came to open and vigorous expression in the excitement which filled Jerusalem after the raising of Lazarus. The priestly party met, full of anxiety over the enormous enthusiasm Jesus was rousing. With fear they spoke of the possible outcome. There was some feeling, it seems, that Jesus might be too much for them. They dreaded it, but they did not know what to

do. Then Caiaphas spoke. He was easily the leader of the group by strength of character as well as by position. There was really only one thing to do about the Galilæan prophet. He must be killed. Then all danger from him would be over. Bluntly as Caiaphas said this, he put it astutely, too. For the good of the people, he said, Jesus must be put to death. He was strong enough to carry his point. The leaders of the Jews united with him to plot for the death of Jesus.

When we see Caiaphas again the plot is in process of being carried out. Jesus has been arrested and is being tried before the high priest. Witnesses have been secured and their evidence is being given. But, somehow, the trial does not move according to the desire of the foes of the Great Teacher. It is quite evident

that a mass of petty accusation is being brought against him. To save the trial from absurdity and to make it a serious menace to Jesus, something must be done. The Master stands in quiet scorn, as obviously trifling charges are brought against him. Once again it is Caiaphas who has strength of character enough to keep the plot alive. He has been studying Jesus. He has insight enough to feel that a great challenge as to his person and work may rouse the Galilæan. He rises in all the dignity of his office. He parries a moment with side questions. Jesus makes no reply. Then he looks Jesus full in the eye. "I adjure thee by the living God," he says, solemnly, "that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God." There is a tense silence. Jesus feels that an hour has come when to re-

fuse to speak would be treason and cowardice. He knows that to speak will seal his doom, but he speaks. He declares that the high priest has correctly spoken. He is all that Caiaphas has said, and the heavens themselves shall see him on the right hand of power.

With ill concealed relief and gratification at the words he has drawn from Jesus, Caiaphas turns to those with him. He rends his garments in mock horror at what he interprets as blasphemy. "What think ye?" he asks the rest. They quickly act up to the part Caiaphas has suggested, and cry out together, "He is worthy of death." Then they treat Jesus with ignominy and scorn, and prepare to lead him away to Pilate to have their sentence confirmed by the Roman power.

So the plot of Caiaphas succeeds,

and Jesus comes to his death. We hear no more words of Caiaphas, though he does for a moment appear in connection with the persecution of the church at a later time. He lives to see the power he believed he had destroyed go moving forth on a career of victory impossible to interrupt.

No one can accuse Caiaphas of weakness. He was a strong and alert man of inflexible purpose, able to command men and secure results. If he had fought on the right side, what a warrior he would have made! If his dominant personality had been surrendered to Jesus, what a Christian leader he would have become! As it is, he stands forth typical of what strength and selfishness will make of a man. He failed to understand the meaning of events. He failed to understand the real signifi-

cance of Jesus. He beat his strength in vain against the walls of God's purpose. Pride and selfishness and a secular mind had blinded his eyes and hardened his heart. When he died the new religion was girding itself to conquer the world.

IX

PILATE

ROMAN law, with all its proud sanctions, did not save Jesus from death. The gross injustice which issued in the crucifixion had the official approval of the Roman governor. This stern representative of the nation which was the lawgiver of the world deliberately sacrificed an innocent man rather than take the risk of being accused of disloyalty to the emperor at Rome. Pilate did not surrender Jesus without a struggle, but he did surrender him; and so it came to pass that the most famous Roman decision was one in which justice was intentionally spurned. However we may use the fact in current discussion, it was the fear of recall which caused

this judge to prove false to his trust.

We can almost watch the processes of the mind of Pilate in this great trial, so full an account have we, when all that the gospel records tell is held together in our minds. We know from other sources that Pilate was a man of hot and imperious temper, very unpopular with the Jews. He hated diplomacy, though he found it necessary to use it as a means to keep his place in the system of Roman rule, where he had made a place for himself. An occasional sudden and sharp reaction, issuing in some startling deed, proved how scornfully proud the man was at heart. He despised the Jews and yet he feared them.

To this man, then, Jesus was brought by the leaders of the Jews, accompanied by a mob ready to cry

out whatever was suggested to them. The Galilæan prophet was already condemned so far as Jewish authority was concerned, but the sentence must be confirmed by the representative of the Roman power.

Pilate looked at Jesus curiously. This man with a form built into sturdy strength by work and outdoor life, with a face drawn with suffering, yet full of noble seriousness, was no criminal. One long look of careful scrutiny told Pilate that. Alone they had a few words of conversation. Very simply Jesus explained to the governor that he had no revolutionary designs. He was not a captain of armies. He was a captain of ideas. His kingdom was not built on fighting men. It was built on the truth. Pilate now felt that he understood the prisoner. He was in the presence of a harmless

philosophical visionary. The Roman, engrossed with deeds rather than thoughts, queried lightly, "What is truth?" and passed out into the presence of Jesus' foes.

Here he found a malignant hostility which surprised him. His attempts to save Jesus clearly roused a deep, sullen anger, which soon burst forth in violent speech. Pilate tried to evade the issue. He sent Jesus to Herod. The prisoner was returned with no decision made. Pilate tried to secure the release of Jesus through a passover custom of setting a prisoner free. But the people called for the release of a blood-stained political revolutionist and still angrily cried for the death of the Galilæan. The dream of Pilate's wife roused a vein of superstition in the grave and stern Roman; the accusation that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God

stirred a strange fear in his heart, and something intangible in the patient, lofty bearing of Jesus confirmed a dimly formed belief that strange and inscrutable things were involved in this person and this trial. He was very eager to be safely out of it all, with the prisoner released.

He tried to appeal to the pity of the people, but the sight of the agonized face beneath the crown of thorns did not move them. The cry that Pilate was a traitor if he did not condemn this man began to run through the crowd. This touched the most vulnerable place in his character. The governor felt that he could allow no such charge as this to go to Rome. To save himself he must condemn the prisoner.

Pilate made a show of placing responsibility on the people to whom

he surrendered, but washing his hands could not change the fact that without his consent Jesus could not have been crucified. With malicious delight in treating the Jews with scorn, he placed an inscription above the cross, which was meant simply to humiliate them. He was disturbed and overwrought and angry and restless, but all this did not lead him to do the one thing which would have saved his manhood and his honor as a judge. The hour of testing had found him a weakling and a coward.

Pilate had good intentions, but he did not have strength of personal character. He is the classic illustration of the weakness which may lie hidden under dignity and the arrogant assertion of power.

The legends which gather about Pilate hesitate between seeing him in the light of his desire to save

Jesus and his actual condemnation of him. One or two facts we know. After a time he was sent to Rome under charges, and the emperor died before his trial. Then he disappears from authentic history.

The Pilate the world remembers is the man who refused to take personal risk to be faithful to the demands of justice, the man who allowed the forms of law to be used for the legal murder of an innocent man, the representative of Roman restraint and fairness who was false to all that was intrusted to him, at the critical hour of his life. If the crying mob causes us to feel that there are times when the masses cannot be trusted, the vacillation of Pilate does not lead us to put our trust in the classes. The truth is that only moral purpose and strength of character can save either the

masses or the classes, the people or their judges, from failure in the testing hours of life. Roman law gave a high standard of conduct. It could not give sufficient motive to secure its enforcement.

In a way the failure of Pilate represents the failure of the system he represented. Law by itself does not produce character, and Jesus, standing in the presence of Pilate, was more than a symbol of that which was to make character where law had failed.

X

HEROD ANTIPAS

HEROD may be called one of the men of the Gospels. He can in no sense be called a man of the gospel. Herod Antipas was for over forty years the ruler of Peræa and Galilee. The two characteristics of his which come most quickly to mind are passion and craft. He was a man of unscrupulous passion and conscienceless craft. When he desired a thing he wanted it with all the heat of a tempestuous and unchecked emotional nature. After his marriage he visited his brother in Rome. His brother's wife, Herodias, strangely fascinated him. The infatuation deepened, and he resolved to have his brother's wife at any cost. His own wife learned of Herod's plans

and escaped to her father, King Aretas. Then Herod worked out the fulfillment of his desires. Herodias, already the mother of Salome by her previous marriage, was made his wife.

With all his unbridled nature, Herod seems to have made a vigorous and, in some senses, an efficient ruler over his restless people. His alert and practical mind, with its gift for strategy, doubtless served him here.

The preaching of John the Baptist may be said to represent a crisis in the life of Herod Antipas. John fearlessly condemned the marriage of Herod to Herodias and brought this haughty ruler face to face with the real moral quality of his sin. Herod was angered, but this was not all. He was deeply stirred. His conscience began to speak insistently. He could not help respecting the

fearless prophet, and some dawning sense of moral values caused him to enjoy John's preaching when the fire of his personal displeasure at the prophet was not burning too brightly. His anger at John and the influence of Herodias caused the arrest of the desert prophet. His respect for the stern messenger of conscience and a certain appreciation of his message caused him to protect his prisoner and to listen to him often.

This state of affairs was bound to come to an end, however. Through the ingenious strategy of Herodias playing on the roused emotions of Herod, when he was partly intoxicated, the death of John was secured. The daughter of the former husband of Herodias was the means by which the hatred of the woman John had condemned found a way to its victim.

After John's death Herod's conscience became a ghastly thing, haunting his sleepless hours. When he heard of the mighty works of Jesus a superstitious tremor seized him and he feared that John had risen from the dead. Herod had believed in John. He had been deeply touched by his sincere, stern ministry. The murder of John seemed the death of the best that was in Herod. Only haunting superstitious fears were left where a robust conscience had begun to make itself heard.

When Jesus was brought before Herod he did not seem to feel that there was anything to say to him. This is in marked contrast to his treatment of Pilate. A moral fight was on in Pilate and Jesus recognized it. Herod's moral fight was over and righteousness was defeated.

The man was still alive, but his manhood seems to have been dead. Jesus made no attempts to rouse him. He refused to reply to his questions. The only explanation of this is that he felt there was no power of response in Herod's mind and heart. The worst that can be said of Herod is that Jesus felt that he had nothing to say to him.

Overreaching ambition finally brought about Herod's banishment. His wife, who had at least the virtue of a proud loyalty, accompanied him into exile. The life of the crafty voluptuary then passes into oblivion. He had lived in regal luxury. He had tasted of many a pleasure, thinking only of his enjoyment and not of its moral cost. He had skillfully used the powers of a shrewd mind in ruling a difficult people. He had heard one great moral voice.

It had stung him. It had revealed to him deep meanings and lofty sanctions which he had never seriously considered before. The day of Herod's opportunity was the day of John's relentless preaching. But turbulent desire, the heat of a nature uncontrolled, and the pride of a selfish will were stronger than the summons which sounded so clearly in the chambers of Herod's soul. The higher demand was silenced. The worst overthrew the best. Conscience, which had been a kingly summons, became a shattering fear. Though he lived on, in sober truth the king was dead. He made the motions of life, but the fires of goodness had expired in his heart. The tragedy of Herod is the suicide of a soul.

XI

THE MAN WHO SAW JESUS DIE

MANY people saw Jesus live. They listened to his speech and looked upon his deeds. A large number of them felt the moral grandeur and human winsomeness of his life. Some of them felt that they lived in a new world as they learned to look out upon life through his eyes. Some looked and listened unmoved and without any real understanding of what was going on around them.

Many people saw Jesus die. Some watched scornfully what they considered the spectacle of a public execution. Some were filled with alarm and wonder and a strange, uncanny sense of nearness to awful issues which they did not really

comprehend. Some stood by with drawn faces and broken hearts, because the very brightness and hope of life was passing from them. The centurion by the cross watched the whole scene with a dawning moral apprehension which made that day a great and outstanding day in his life's experience.

The centurion was a brave and vigorous Roman soldier. He was accustomed to hard experiences and hard scenes. Strength rather than beauty was found in the sanctuary of his life. A strong-muscled, inflexible man, ready for hard fights and long campaigns, he typified in his own body and his own personality the stern strength of Rome.

The centurion knew little of Jesus before the day of the cross. Indeed, he may never have heard of the man of Galilee until he was called upon

to assist in the execution of the three condemned criminals. He probably went to his task as one of those duties which come in the course of the day, feeling little interest in the men who were to pass out of life so soon, and no curiosity about them.

It soon became evident to the centurion, however, that this was no ordinary execution. The man on the central cross was different from any condemned man he had ever seen. There was something in the awful quiet of that one face which fastened the eyes of the centurion upon it. From that moment he was engrossed in watching how this man died.

In the crowd about the cross the Roman soldier detected various feelings about the central figure in the day's tragedy. The leaders of the

Jews moved with singular exultation among the crowd. They seemed to be enjoying what was going on. Occasionally they uttered biting words to incite the crowd to rail against the man on the central cross. There were many who seemed the willing creatures of the leaders of the Jews. They filled the air with scorn of the Galilæan.

There were also many whose faces were drawn with sympathy and pain. They seemed mystified and confused, as if something entirely unforeseen, something for which they were completely unprepared, was occurring.

One little circle seemed to gather to itself the agony of the hour. The face of one woman, white with unutterable pain, fastened itself on the centurion's mind.

But meantime various things were occurring. Once and again the figure

on the cross spoke. There were words of prayer for those who put him to death, as if even in this hour there was no hatred in his heart. The centurion heard these words with strange stirrings of his own heartstrings. There was an awful cry of deep anguish, as if the weight of the world's wrong lay upon the man on the cross, and the world's evil had settled in darkness about him and he was left utterly alone with its blackness. There was a tender word to the woman of the anguished face. Like a flash it came to the centurion that she was the mother of the Man on the cross. Darkness had come over the land, and in the unearthly night in the daytime all faces stood out in an unnatural fashion which fairly struck terror to his heart.

During the moments that passed

into hours the centurion had much time for thought. Looking up at the face of the great sufferer, it seemed as if all that was deepest and best in his own life was drawn to the surface of his mind. This Man's death seemed a challenge to the centurion's own manhood, and as he looked upon the Man on the cross his feeling was not so much pity as suffering awe. He had never felt so in the presence of death before.

At last there was a dim sense of a change in things. The face on the cross seemed transfigured with an ineffable peace. A deep word of satisfaction passed his lips. "It is finished," he said, as if his agony had been a great achievement. Then, as his face lost all trace of pain and was full of heavenly quiet, he breathed forth, "Father, into thy hands I

commend my spirit," and after that, with a cry which was a triumphant shout, he met the moment of death.

The centurion stood still looking up at that silent form. Then the feelings within him welled into speech. "Truly," he said, "this was a righteous man." He was silent a moment. Then away from the depths of his life, and the place of daring venture in his soul, the whole impression of that day rose up and put itself in words. "Truly," he said, "this man was the Son of God." This was the noteworthy fact about the centurion. He recognized the Prince upon the cross. We dare believe that that day and its memories became the defining and deciding things in his after life.

XII

THE MAN OF THE GOSPELS

We have discussed eleven of the men of the Gospels. Now we are to think of *the Man* of the Gospels. Jesus is not simply the most human figure in the gospel gallery; he is the only completely and perfectly human figure. The others represent humanity marred by sad flaws. He represents humanity with no speck or flaw or any such thing.

We shall never appreciate the significance of Jesus until we have come to see that he was more than a man—the deity of Jesus is the corner stone of the church; but it is also true that we shall never understand Jesus if we think of him as less than a man. To feel the perfection of his humanity is the

first step toward apprehending his deity.

Bulwer Lytton tells somewhere the story of a man who felt all the while as if he were a spectator of the human drama. He was not a part of it. He was an onlooker. Jesus gives us no such impression as we read in the Gospels the record of his life. He did not stand on the bank looking at the stream flowing past him. He was a part of the stream. He entered into human life. Its experiences, its hopes and fears, its joys and sorrows, and its testing conflicts were his own. He was a real man and he lived a real man's life.

An illustration of this is found in the fact that people always felt near to Jesus. They did not find it hard to approach him. They found it hard not to approach him. In-

stinctively they felt that he would understand them. It was not simply that human life was an open book in his hand. It was an open book in his heart. There was nothing in human experience foreign to his understanding and sympathy.

If we would come to the defining thing about his life as a man, we must say that it was the way in which seeming opposites met and were harmonized in his character. He was a man of perfect poise. He was always a master of the hour and he was always a master of men. A certain kingly steadiness marked his life. But all the while he was a man of passion. His poise was not the cold complacency of an unkindled life. Many a fire was burning in his heart, but he was like the burning bush which Moses saw, always burning but never consumed.

There was always heat, but never conflagration. The passionate intensity of his life was steadied into the most perfect poise.

The voice of conscience was dominant in his words and in his life. Righteousness was as regal in his teachings as in any sharp summons of the Old Testament prophets. At the same time the voice of a loving heart spoke in all his speech and made itself heard in all his deeds. A great tenderness suffused his life. In a strange, wonderful way sinful men in his presence felt that in him "Righteousness and peace had kissed each other." The conscience had made friends with the heart, and the heart felt the mastery of the moral law.

Sanctity and a noble secularity met together in the life of Jesus. Never was there a life which showed

such intimate fellowship with the unseen. Never was there a life in which prayer was such a deep and beautiful communion. Never was there a life so constantly conscious of the presence of the heavenly Father. And at the same time there was such hearty and zestful human contact that the critics seized upon it for condemnation. "This man," they said, "is a winebibber and a friend of publicans and sinners." In him sainthood smacked of the soil and the secular was made one with the sacred.

All this bringing into unity of contradictory characteristics was no light and easy achievement. It was wrought out in struggle, with the stress and strain of many a hard conflict. The garment of a perfect life was not given to Jesus ready made. He cut it from the materials

of his own experiences, and fitted it to his own manhood with unerring skill. The keeping of his motives perfect and the expressing of them in perfect deeds is the very point at which his human life becomes divine. "He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin."

It was not simply as the Man of the Gospels, however, that Jesus gave the world a gospel. Nor when we have seen that the Man of the Gospels grows beyond human stature and reaches the height of the Son of God, have we come to a full understanding of the message which is transforming the world. The incarnation was necessary to salvation, but the incarnation was not the achievement of salvation.

It is as we stand before the green hill far away, and with faces hidden in the presence of Calvary's tragedy,

that we reach the heart of the whole matter. We have a glorious heritage in the Son of man, we have a mighty ministry in the life of the Son of God, but the transforming of the life of men comes from the decisive deed upon the cross. It is in the presence of the cross that we really see the meaning of the lives of all the men of the Gospels. It was upon the cross that the Man of the Gospels, who is God incarnate, did his great work for men. It is through the creative power of Calvary that we in our day in some genuine sense may be made into men of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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